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by

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2010

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MEDIA HACKING

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MEDIA HACKING

by

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Report

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The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
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DEDICATION

This Report is dedicated to memory of my father, Charles Vance Stanley.

To the past and to what has shaped me.

I would also like to dedicate this report to my niece, Charli Madison Stanley.

To the future and to whatever may come.

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ABSTRACT

MEDIA HACKING

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Bradley Petersen

Jeffrey Charles Stanley is an M.F.A. Candidate in Transmedia in the Department of Art and Art History. The Artist, Jeff Stanley, Works as a cultural “hacker” and critical “terrorist” with the aid of video and the internet. The character, Jeff Stanley, plays the role of a 2010 Max Headroom, the popular 80s anti-corporate TV personality/talking head and seller of Pepsi. Media delivers people. A few deliver media. The audience is the product. Media hacking is a technique that allows an artist, or anti-artist, to change the game and fight back.

An artist practice can be open to technology, yet remain powerful, and culturally and socially relevant. Jeff Stanley is a virtual AI, a person, and a corporate entity. With this new holy trinity, the combined efforts as a person, a virtual AI, and a corporation will provide the enhancement an artist needs today. Art and its methods must evolve as the playing field evolves. Technology defines the 21st century artist.

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INTRODUCTION

A satellite is traveling in orbit around the Earth. A user of satellite imaging technology¹ can zoom in on a human being on planet Earth from outer space (Figures 01 and 02). However, human beings are misoriented. The misorientation has been inherited throughout time. Human beings are conditioned by their environment, historical contexts, and interactions with technology.² The operator of satellite imaging technology may conclude that the



Figure 01

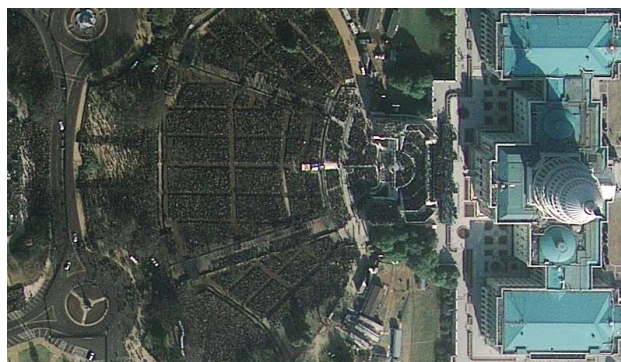


Figure 02

living rest on a spherical planet that extends in an “infinite” amount of directions albeit limited by the 7,926.41 mile diameter of the Earth. The human beings that do not interact daily with satellite imaging technology will be less inclined to conclude that the world as it is inhabited would exist without a North, a South, an East, or a West. In other words, the most “intelligent” beings that dwell on Earth

¹ This user is a human being, potentially working for a government organization, corporation, etc., however: Her, or his, interaction with the scale of the globe allows for a tangible effect the magnitude of that scale has on the living.

² This is what Hans-Georg Gadamer referred to as the “horizon” of understanding. The “horizon of understanding” of a person is developed from their tradition.

conclude that there are four corners of the globe.³ Google Earth (Figure 03) produces the same orientation as the traditional map further misorienting even the technologically literate.⁴ The user of Google Earth sees the globe with “North” oriented as “Up”, “East” oriented as “Right”, etc. The entire scene of the globe is presented as a window with four corners. At any moment viewing any location on Google Earth, the viewer is misoriented by the presence of the window.



Figure 03



Figure 04

Artists⁵ and their chosen media are subject to this misorientation. The misorientation for an artist is art history. I should say that works of art are in a dialogue with art history. In the institution, studio art students are conditioned.

³ Buckminster Fuller introduces Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (1970) with a similar claim. Fuller is not surprised that people were still “misoriented”.

⁴ Gadamer concluded that people exist in not a closed horizon, but a fusion of horizons. Decades before Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), Buckminster Fuller patented the *Dymaxion Map* (1946, *The AirOcean World Map*, 1954, Figure 04) which unfolds the globe from a sphere into an icosahedron that contains the Earth's continents as a single island-like “starship” to visualize a similar conclusion: People have a shared “horizon”. “We” are in this together. This visualization disrupts the traditional projections of maps of Earth.

⁵ Artists are human beings that make a living through the creation, transformation, or arrangement of images, objects, or situations in life. Whether everyone that claims to be an artists deserves the title is another story. Artists are in no way “greater” than other human beings. I will refuse to call myself an artist. I am using the phrase “media hacker” to describe my interaction with art/anti-art/life. A “media hacker” is a human being that “hacks” “media”.

The students must produce work similar to what is known, or desired, through the understanding of their peers and instructors. Students are rewarded for producing similar finds as artists of the past. This produces several artists that look familiar yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Artists are produced with the systematic intent of remaining misoriented.

An artist must disrupt the inherited misorientation they find in her, or his, world to arrive at a new orientation. Otherwise, a stale scent will remain with her, or him, throughout their career. The misorientation is proper at first. The way people understand and gauge video is through “sequencing” a visual vocabulary that presents a desired effect. Through the interpretation of the vocabulary the viewer presents a judgment. The judgment that is made is usually molded out of a conditioned orientation, or taste. There is “good taste”, “bad taste”, and “indifferent taste”. “Good taste” is the standardized misorientation in which most people are invested: This is mistaken as the “universal”. “Bad taste” is the misorientation in which few people are invested: This is camp for example. “Indifferent taste” is an analytic/synthetic hybridized orientation in which fewer people are invested: This orientation presents a balanced conclusion.

In 2008, I was misoriented. I had developed work based on nature: Nature was beauty. I worried mainly about things containing aesthetic appeal. I was involved with nature and my findings in nature which are visually poetic. The meaning I placed on the art object and the video signal came from a traditional

and nuanced expression. I valued the universal. I became conflicted, realizing that the notion of beauty is not universal.

Upon this realization, I generated a self-fulfilled prophecy about the future of my work. The piece, *The Apocalypse Is Now* (2008, Figure 05), shows a time-traveler presenting a vision of a dystopic future to the viewer. The time-traveler, “The Large Hadron Collider will” produce a black-hole which will engulf the Earth, transforming it and all that is living on it. Aside from the bad script, this video



Figure 05

establishes a link to technology that changes the world. I produce the video casting the time-traveler as myself. The video is produced in the past, the message is for the present, but it is about the future. Using digital chroma key removal to composites the video, my head over-imposes still images, motion graphics, and 3D animation. The result is a digital video that is transformed by the very subject matter, which is scripted: My head denotes my own reality.

I was confronted with the task of updating and recoding my work as fast as technology changes. It transformed my actions, daily routine, and dialogue more than it did for an average user. The computer became a resource and true extension of my creative outlet, and consciousness. Digital video editing, the internet, and 3D animation invaded my thoughts.

As I browsed the internet, the act of archiving news stories, Google searched images, and other databases began to impact the way I would produce works of art. I saw all media and all images as sources of semiotic assets that I would use in a new and unexpected fashion. As I developed this dialogue with images and databases, I became a media hacker.⁶

Media hacking became a way for me to correct the misorientation I felt in existence. I do not want to confuse this misorientation with anxiety, but I will say that anxiety is a factor in the misorientation that is being human. Their use of language is misorienting and misoriented. A misorientation essentially becomes a way of seeing for everyone. Mass media is a dominant source of the public's current misorientation. The figures in mass media that I confront within my work are great social divider and, ultimately, they fuel a systematic sense of despair and damnation.

My job is to develop media hacking that exploits and explores the misorientation that is mass media. This development began with videos like *The*

⁶ A media hacker disrupts the status quo. The status quo is the existing state of affairs that are produced by mass media, or the produced masses.

Apocalypse Is Now and continued with works that took the gesture of appropriation literally, and later, rhetorically. Media aesthetic theory, mass media, and entertainment helped me to lay the foundation for this approach.

POINT OF ENTRY

From 2008 to 2011, I produced several works of art that exploit the appropriation of digital media by use of computer technology. This process of appropriation began for me with a “veiling” of the subject matter and an aestheticizing of the image. These images were beautified, reduced, and misoriented. Neither, I was entirely convinced with the outcome, nor were my intentions translated through the finished product. I decided to change the way I used appropriation. The appropriation became subordinated to a process of character construction. I performed through technology: Through the virtual. A character began to develop. The subject matter became better grounded and, over time, the content became more specific.



Figure 06

With virtual technology, I began to appropriate imagery as influenced by pop artists and contemporary photographers.⁷ In 2009, I created a series of

⁷ I had tapped into a historical context for works photographic and reproducible. Thomas Ruff produced works slightly similar in two series titled *Nudes* (2003 book) and *jpegs* (2009, book) of pornography and disaster. I had also produced works with the subject matter of disasters and pornography within the digital “paintings”. Ruff enlarged the images, or used digital filters in some cases, to intentionally produce pixilation and jpeg artifacts. Example: Thomas Ruff, *Jpeg bi01* (2007, Figure 06)

photographs and videos that I called “paintings”, which were created from images and videos taken from the web. These virtual “paintings” relied on heavy manipulation produced by software. I duplicated small rectangular samples of the image that resembled an enhanced jpeg compression artifact. The artifact is common in images that are compressed, especially when the image is incorrectly distorted through an algorithm, or scaled beyond 100% of the original resolution.⁸



Figure 07

H2 (2009, Figure 07), one of the video “paintings”, was produced from a video found on Youtube of a helicopter taking off and then crashing.⁹ The video

⁸ At the same time, a phenomena known as data-moshing was taking the internet by storm. Data-moshing utilizes a type of compression artifact that occurs when two, or more, video clips are aligned in the same sequence. The keyframes of each video are all removed, except that of the first keyframe in the grouping. Any frame that has a change in motion will produced a new image merged with the pixels of previously existing frames. The order of the sequence influences the “look” of the video. The outcome is a visual sea change. The difference between this process and my “painting” process is the difference in automatic and manual. A combination of compression types and chance produces data-moshing. A manual arrangement of layers in any digital video editing software produces my “painting” effect.

⁹ An example of datamoshing is Kanye West’s music video *Welcome to Heartbreak* (2009, Figure 08).



Figure 08



Figure 09

is stretched and chopped as the helicopter loses and regains its recognizable appearance. The viewer can hear the sound of the helicopter blades violently chopping the air. The voice of the man behind the camera is audible as well as the voices of spectators not on camera. At the end of the video, the helicopter is heard spinning out of control. The blades break apart and the helicopter shrieks. The spectators scream in horror. The image on the other hand transforms into another helicopter (possibly military grade) colliding with the ground in a cloud of smoke and fire (Figure 09).

The subject matter remains as a ghost. The image of the helicopter is blurred, buried, and fragmented by the layering that the manual digital effect produces. The horror found in the original video is absent. In repeating this method of digital “painting”, several videos produced through had tangentially horrific subject matter.

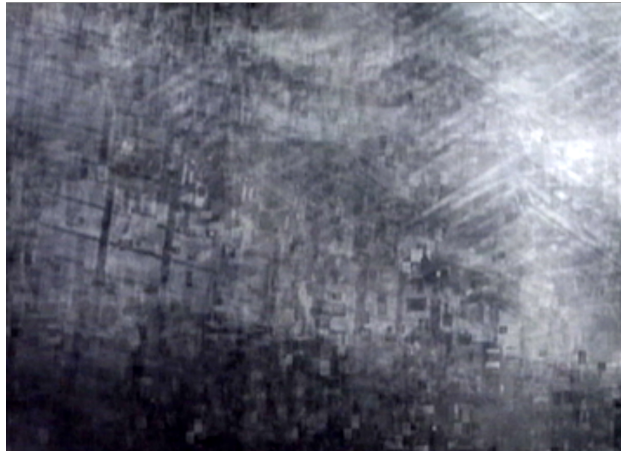


Figure 10

Chernobyl (2009, Figure 10) displays archival footage from Chernobyl, Ukraine, immediately after the explosion of a nuclear power plant that caused radioactive fallout on April 26th, 1986. Alongside the footage from the disaster is footage of a research team returning to the area in 2006. Images of these events are disintegrated and pulled apart by the digital “painting” effect.

My intention with this effect was to produce an aesthetic experience simulating particles of “reality”¹⁰ being pulled apart. I wanted to display the idea of digital media traveling at a wireless level. A Youtube video, a Wikipedia page, or an e-mail are stretched as thin as air by satellite or tower communication. The signal of digital media as thin as air is traveling around the viewer. The videos replicated, or potentially hacked, the fragmentation of this digital “air”. The result of pulling apart particles resembles two types of transmutation. The image’s surface shows a “hyperbolic”, or possibly “quantum”, fragmentation of the original source, or dimensional transmutation. The clustering and repeating of parts of

¹⁰ This “reality” is media reality, digital media traveling wirelessly.

the subject matter give the look of a mutating life form, or biological transmutation.

With the dimensional transmutation, the physical subject matter becomes a dimensional transmutation between the wireless media and the wired media.¹¹ A dimensional transmutation transforms a dimensionless framework¹² into something with dimension. The digital media is accumulated at different intervals as it appears on a user's desktop.¹³ Information and time contained in the original video is added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided into the altered finished product. The virtual surface of the altered video only exists in two dimensions, x and y,¹⁴ but the result of my digital "painting" creates a simulated "quantum" particle distortion, or disbursement. For example, the image's surface of *H2*, or *Chernobyl*, resembles geometric patterns in the hyperbolic animations of a cube in the 4th dimension.¹⁵

¹¹ The final product is an imagined "look" of this transmutation. The image travels through someone's lens, then it is uploaded onto a computer, and travels through the wired and wireless internet.

¹² In this case, the frequency is given dimension through an x and y variable.

¹³ Although with wireless internet, the data is traveling in 0s and 1s through radio frequencies. The data is not accumulation linearly between the wireless and the wired. The video is cut by means of a nonlinear video editing software. The speed of a wireless connection makes no difference, especially using file sharing such as BitTorrent which copies data from separate peers on a network dividing the load and data into even smaller intervals.

¹⁴ Time is also altered. You see the subject moving before and after it happens in time: The subject matter is folding and unfolding in time.

¹⁵ For Example: Rotating Four-Dimensional Hyperobject, *Hypercube*, Michael Noll, Ken Knowlton, Stanley Van Der Beek, and Bell Labs, 1960 (Figure 11). The result adds "deformities" to the single helicopter that transmutes into a more complicated helicopter in *H2*.

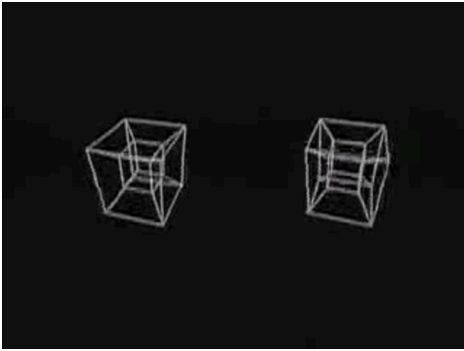


Figure 11



Figure 12

Returning specifically to *Chernobyl*, the multiplying of information with the “painting” effect resembles the multiplying of information effects of biological transmutation. Biological transmutation (Figure 12) occurs when radioactive fallout creates mutations in a living organism. The “painting” adds data to the video, which creates a gradual exponential growth of the virtual surface. In this context, Chernobyl’s surface grows from the nuclear fallout in *Chernobyl*. Buildings extend out in small rectangular shapes. The audio is also multiplied to create a “transmutating” chorus.

The haunting sounds and the unknown surface unravel in a shocking way. The virtual “paintings” may have created the most stunningly beautiful images, but the intention of building upon content in my work had taken a step back.

Although, the new methods I had developed created a new visual language: A virtual language. Digital sampling, blending, and cloning were fundamental in creating the image surface. This was not new for images, but it was a new method for photographic works. However, I realized the loss assessed by not letting a viewer inside my thought process. The aesthetic

repressed the actual subject and the aesthetic preciseness of an artwork had to be revised. I contemplated leaving “art” behind to pursue something more specific.

As I thought of ways to produce work that was not “art”, I discovered works referred to as rephotographs by Richard Prince¹⁶. I would follow this point of origin to trace the subject matter in the future. The reproducibility of mass media would stick to the surface.¹⁷ My practice became less about the transformation of the image, or surface; and it would develop into the transformation of ideas. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, by Walter Benjamin, would reveal to me how political the image could be whether true propaganda, or artistic decision.



Figure 13



Figure 14

¹⁶ Newman, Michael. Richard Prince: *Untitled (couple)*. MIT Press: 2006. Price's rephotographed photography that is discussed in Newman's book examines the strategy of rephotographing an image. This is basically appropriating images by taking pictures of magazine advertisements. Price's works *Untitled (couple)* (1977, Figure 13) and *Untitled (cowboy)* (1989, Figure 14) are critical of advertising and commercial appeal. *Untitled (cowboy)* is from the Marlboro Man advertising campaign, however the “rephotograph” crops out the text and the actual product. The reduction leaves the lone Marlboro Man riding his trusty steed. What the viewer is left to contemplate is a residue of an idea of what is “American”.

¹⁷ *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), by Walter Benjamin, would reveal to me how political the image could be whether true propaganda, or artistic decision.

FROM VIRTUAL POST-PRODUCTION TO VIRTUAL BODY

The possibilities of being virtual within the world wide web had engulfed me. Empowered through the theories of media aesthetics and the language of new media,¹⁸ I developed more aggressive content. I would start to respond to an idea as opposed to responding to an existing image, or video.

In the summer of 2009, my practice began to comment on culture. I simultaneously developed *POST-PRODUCTION* (2009) and *CURRENCY* (2009). These projects were guided by the idea of a “cultural currency”. The first, *POST-PRODUCTION*, refers to dominant cultural production. The second, *CURRENCY* (a designed currency)¹⁹, mixes cultural figures and events.

POST-PRODUCTION (Figure 15), a documentary style video, models itself on a section of Nicholas Bourriaud’s book titled *Postproduction*²⁰ which defines current trends in contemporary art (cultural) practice.²¹ According to Bourriaud, production became a post-production process. In my work, I browse

¹⁸ Theories and ideas produced by figures like Benjaumin, Marshall McLuhan, and Lev Manovich. McLuhan’s words, “The Medium is the Message,” helped me understand that content was delivered by the characteristics of media, and that media was something to be conquered by an artist. McLuhan’s book is titled *The Medium is the Massage* (Message, Mess Age, Massage, Mass Age, 1967). Whoever controls media controls the message. Manovich expresses ideas about art and media within new media (internet and online video production) building on these ideas. A very significant principle in defining new media is the characteristic of transcoding, or that logic of a computer influences our own understanding of ourselves, and what we represent. Manovich’s book is titled *The Languague of New Media* (2002).

¹⁹ Generally accepted as a mechanism of economic exchange.

²⁰ Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. Lukas and Sternberg: 2007. Postproduction identifies that contemporary artists utilize existing artworks as if updating the idea presented by the Situationists called detournement.

²¹ In this example, “cultural currency” is the current trends of culture. The book, *Postproduction*, suggests that “production is a form of capital by which consumers carry out a set of procedures that makes them renters of culture.” Pg. 37.

the web and acquire still imagery, video footage, and supplement the text developing an entire post-production process. As narrated by Jeff Stanley, *Postproduction's* text is dubbed over the still and video imagery. As a result, the final outcome would resemble a powerpoint presentation.²²



Figure 15



Figure 16

The video, *POST-PRODUCTION*, relates influences of the DADA artists, the Situationists, and Hip-Hop culture. The reproduction of Rembrandt is sampled on an ironing board (Figure 16), a readymade proposed by Marcel Duchamp. The DJ samples music by applying pressure with his hands on a turntable.²³ These examples create a composition from existing “copyright” material. The idea is presented that an artist should take advantage of all existing images and artworks, or potentially a hacking of existing cultural

²² This is a tool utilized in art practices by several Relational artists. Another approach by artists described by Bourriaud as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.” Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Esthétique relationnelle* (Relational Aesthetics, 2002). Les Presse Du Reel, Franc: 1998. Pg. 113.

²³ Marcel Duchamp’s Rembrandt ironing board, a reciprocal readymade, is an example of artistic détournement. Bourriaud writes that the idea of Duchamp’s readymades allows for the context of political use of détournement, which let’s images communicate. Artworks can serve as building blocks for new work. The DJ samples from existing works, or the catalogue of songs, to build a new song. The DJ bases her, or his work, on principles inherited from the history of the avant garde.

materials. This process of sampling creates a foundation for the hacking of conflict of cultural interest in *CURRENCY*.

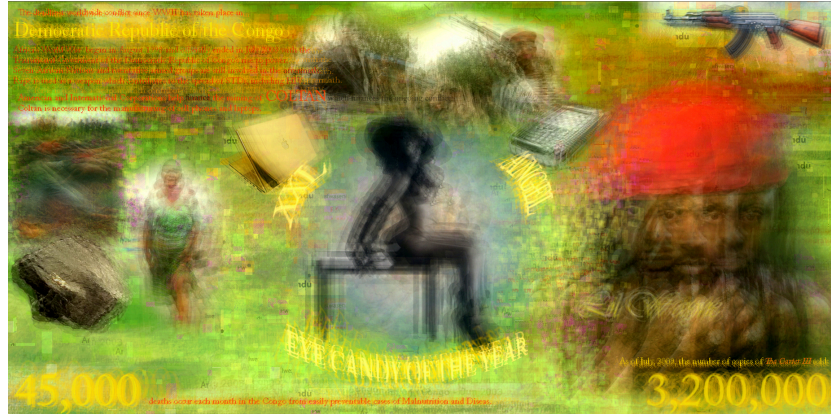


Figure 17

The *CURRENCY* photographs' contents mix a pop icon and a world conflict. Images from the web are sampled and blended with information and numbers creating a composition emphasizing the condition of the subjects, which are either the pop icon, or the world conflict. *LIL WAYNE REMIXES THE CONGO* (2009, Figure 17), one of four *CURRENCY* images, contains a photograph of Lil Wayne from his critical and commercially successful album, *Tha Carter III*. This image of Lil Wayne (pop star) is sampled with (presented as opposed to) the images of dead bodies, laptops, and cell phones.²⁴ The figure on the left side of the photograph, 45,000,²⁵ is the number of deaths per month from an ongoing civil unrest and spread of AIDS/HIV in the DRC set against the

²⁴ The dead bodies are victims of civil unrest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Laptops and cell phones are produced with tantalum, which is extracted from the mineral coltan. Tantalum is also used to make DVD players and video game consoles. It is exported from DRC to use primarily in the American market.

²⁵ Figure taken from the Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Ongoing Crisis, a study reported by the International Rescue Committee in 2007.

figure on the right, 3,200,000,²⁶ which is the number of *Tha Carter III* albums, Lil Wayne's critically and commercially successful album, sold between 2008 and 2009.

The division of class is presented in the amount of money Lil Wayne makes versus the wages that workers make in the DRC from hard labor. Neither figure; Lil Wayne's actual net gain versus, nor the average wage made by a worker in the DRC; is represented.²⁷ Instead, the death rate in DRC related to violence (lower class/third world) and an album sale figure projecting Lil Wayne's success (upper class/first world) are only approximations.²⁸ For the first time, I pointed out to actual facts and revealed specific subject matter and important cultural phenomenon.

²⁶ According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). Information can be found through a searchable database online at <http://www.riaa.com>.

²⁷ The issue of class is obviously beyond the color of skin, but the issue of race is still present. Lil Wayne, an African American born in New Orleans, Louisiana, uses Afro-beat as the foundation to lay down his lyrics. The media often mistakes him as a Nigerian because of his lyrics along with his exaggerated rap style that may sound "African".

²⁸ Lil Wayne sells the most albums in the middle of an economic crisis. Even though Lil Wayne is a master of lyrics, he misorients his audience and he uses his to advance the corporate interest and consumer culture and its conspicuous consumption. In the minds of the youth, Hip-Hop still represents the underground, the revolutionary. This is still true in terms of craft, but the lifestyle of a Hip-Hop artist is equal to that of a Wall Street executives and con man. The Wall Street broker, the Hip-Hop artist, and the Hip-Hop fan as well as others partake in the consuming. In the image, the products of worship are diamond watches, gold plated laptops, and diamond encrusted cell phones. The DRC, an area in Africa that is struggling with prolonged unrest, mines coltan as a main export. Coltan is the market name for columbite-tantalite the mineral that is used in tantalum extraction. Currently coltan/tantalum is found throughout Africa, with the largest supply mined from the Democratic Republic of Congo as of 2009. A Rwandan military presence (potentially with the aide of "western" mining corporations) forced prisoners-of-war to mine the country's tantalum, which was then smuggled into Rwanda, or Uganda. This still occurs based on the rarity of the mineral. Information on this subject is found on the United Nations' webpage at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc7057.doc.htm> as well as a UN report at <http://www.un.org/peace/africa/Diamond.html>.

It became clear to me that despite innovative post-production and method the complexity and drama of the subject matter remained under-represented. That led me to develop a virtual body and *The Forum on the Future of Mankind* (2009-2010). With the *CURRENCY* photos, the digital “paint” method is applied as a remixing and sampling effect. This use of the effect establishes a more relatable aesthetic, resembling computer-based a collage technique.²⁹ Through the blending and sampling, or surface “hacking”, the content is presented in a seductive and pleasant way. However, this way of working relied on a specific read to connect subject matter to interpret the work’s content. The content is lost in the aesthetic. The image creates a further misorientation.

Similarly, *Post-Production* is tied to the subject matter and context of the Bourriaud book, *Postproduction*. This relies on the reading of *Postproduction*, which is introduced in the narration to interpret the conclusion in the context of *Post-Production*. The documentary approach of *Post-Production* did allow for a sampling, mixing, and blending found in the “painting” method of *CURRENCY* without surface manipulation, or “hacking”. As a result, the documentary video delivered a message to the viewer through a type of metaphrasing of notations from the original text.

This approach opened the door for a new formal and conceptual direction. Video would develop a metaphrasing to communicate a message to the

²⁹ Artists use similar methods such as datamoshing to access this kind of aesthetic.

audience. I would script more action, embedding a character in media, to simulate the struggle with virtual media.

THE FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF MANKIND VIRTUAL PRODUCTION AND POST-PRODUCTION

In 2009, I began to develop *The Forum on the Future of Mankind* (2009-2010, *FOFOM*), the three-act experimental video that reached a new expression of form and content. The form consists of three performing agents: characters, video, and graphics.³⁰ The content: An idealist character, Jeff Stanley, grows into a monster in a world he does not understand while he is indefinitely trapped by the misorienting effects of media. The method: Becoming critical of and violent towards cultural institutions and social subjects.

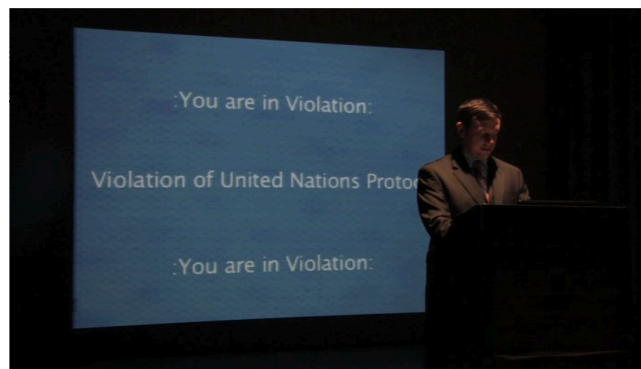


Figure 18

ACT I: art is violence (2009, Figure 18) tells an overarching virtual narrative about art history through a powerpoint lecture presented by a character, Jeff Stanley.³¹ The audience is unseen. Jeff Stanley, talks behind a podium presented by means of two-camera system. Jump cuts occur. The audio is

³⁰ There is a performance involved in *FOFOM*. However, the final product is not a performance, but a video. The video itself performs to a certain extent. This idea will be pushed in the following works. I presented the video in three acts as a projection, but it has been uploaded to vimeo.com under the user: Jeff Stanley.

³¹ Is Jeff Stanley an artist, a lecturer, or media hacker?

disjunctively dubbed. As a wall is removed, an unexpected and confusing theatrical break occurs revealing a previously unseen “divine” sculpture made of plaster, which confronts the viewer. As the “divine” sculpture speaks through a monitor, and through the presenter’s display (Figure 19), I continue to use heady-handedly constructed methodical forms (hacks).



Figure 19

As an editor, I am hacking Jeff Stanley with cuts. The “divine” sculpture hacks the presentation in the name of global government. The sculpture declares that Jeff Stanley must be stopped, because he is a terrorist and that its “divine” power comes from the United Nations (UN). The “divine” sculpture has an androgynous voice. The hacking of the presentation becomes an art of seduction as the sculpture seduces Jeff Stanley. Jeff Stanley resists the flirtation and resolves the situation with violence. With a white handled sledgehammer, Jeff Stanley crushes the “divine” sculpture.³² Alone on a dark stage, Jeff Stanley gives a “heroic” speech.

³² A third hacking: The Jeff Stanley hacks and destroys the “divine” sculpture with the sledgehammer.

References in the powerpoint lecture of art is violence produce a broken, nonlinear hypertext like Jeff Stanley's argument. The argument presented, "art is violence", describes the creation of art³³ with a lower-case "a"; which is a form of "violence" in opposition to High Art, Art with a capital "A". The style of presentation contains gaps, which allow the viewer to skip, or to fill in the blanks. The hypertextuality³⁴ produces a virtual tagging and hacking if not hijacking of segments within art history (misorientation). The short notations range from a cave painting from approximately 15,000 BC (Figure 20) to Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* (1988-1989, Figure 21). These images, low art, present conflict with High Art and social norms. Jeff Stanley's presentation irritates the virtual government.



Figure 20



Figure 21

³³ It is understood that "art" with a lower-case "a" is a form of anti-art, or low art. An "art" can also refer to works of art that produce social awareness, or undertake a political position. Media hacking is "art".

³⁴ In this case, hypertextuality is the interconnectedness of art history and works of art notated in the video, and any associated interpretations.

As the lecture³⁵ is interrupted by the “divine” sculpture, the video documentation of the lecture merges with a theatrical, or film like quality. The video becomes a play in a virtual, hyperbolic landscape, drama staged in the mind of Jeff Stanley; filled with agency, secrecy, and revelation.³⁶

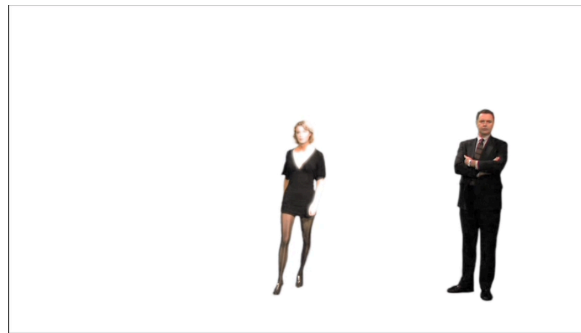


Figure 22

The *FOFOM* builds on the persona of Jeff Stanley and hyperbolic landscape with *ACT II: ART IS FASCISM* (2009-2010). At the start of this act, two characters teleport into a white virtual space (Figure 22). The first is a woman, a representative of the Art World. The second is a man, a representative of Art History. Jeff Stanley follows the new characters along with graphics and text that appears to be parts of one and the same space (Figure 23). The space is slowly revealed to be a display contained by a web browser on

³⁵ Jeff Stanley's lecture is a performance and meta-performance, the performance of the powerpoint, the performance of myself, and the performance of editing..

³⁶ The work of Ian Flemming was inspirational. His character, James Bond, was a combination of two men: An amalgamation of two spies that lived separate lives. The James Bond films integrate sex, violence, and commercial appeal with politics, culture, and conspiracy.

a computer desktop. Jeff Stanley presents another hypertextual argument in this web browser; the space is virtual and so is his body.

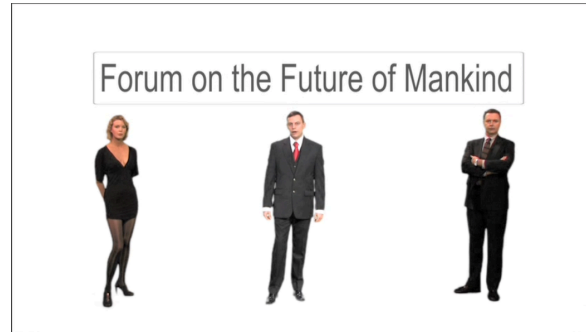


Figure 23

In the case of *ART IS FASCISM*, Jeff Stanley dissects Art History and the Art World. He relates the two disciplines to Fascism. Passages from texts are quoted and connected. A notation from William Blake's poem, Milton, is juxtaposed against a notation from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto. Throughout the video, Jeff Stanley shouts quotes from Benjamin's *WAAMR*.³⁷ These texts are combined with images of online media such as reference to Sarah Palin's Wikipedia "touch up", or images of the post-9/11 Pentagon (Figure 24), being analyzed for evidence of the plane. With a mixture of monologue, text, and image, Jeff Stanley reaches the conclusion that mass media enslaves its user with embedded data mining.³⁸ This is Jeff Stanley's break into the world of High Art.

³⁷ *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.*

³⁸ The data mining in *ART IS FASCISM* is embedded in sites across the internet, including the cloud. The cloud is public network of interconnected computers that contain data and software that is remotely accessed by the user on a personal computer. The data mining profiles the user and in some cases used in algorithmic data sets of an Artificial Intelligence.



Figure 24

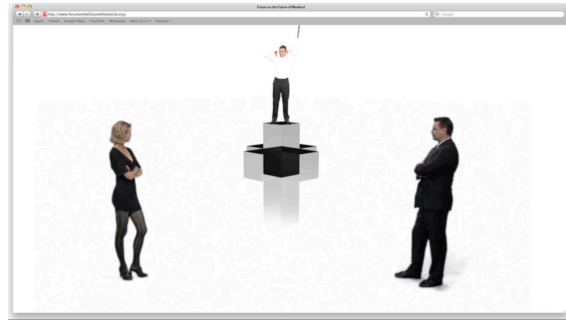


Figure 25

Jeff Stanley admits that he is a fascist after analyzing his work. Upon this realization, he decides to commit suicide by hanging himself. However, the suicide is staged with the help of a hypercube podium (Figure 25) elevating Jeff Stanley to his death. The rope around Jeff Stanley's neck breaks as he potentially falls to his death. He does not die. This act causes the two other characters to become active.

Art History is angry. Jeff Stanley and Art History made a deal that he would kill himself to promote his career. In return, Art History will publish books and make the deceased Jeff Stanley a famous artist. Art History pulls out a gun and shoots Jeff Stanley (Figure 26). Jeff Stanley dies in a pool of his blood.



Figure 26



Figure 27

Ultimately, the databases derived from data mining are accessible by corporations, or whoever cares to pay for the information in the new wild west world, or world wide web.

The representative of Art History presents a eulogy for Jeff Stanley. Art World moves quickly to grab the gun Art History dropped. She shoots Art History through the torso (Figure 27). Art History dies in a pool of his blood as well. As she initiates the viewer, Art World explains to the viewer that she had to make sure Jeff Stanley died during this presentation. Jeff Stanley had apparently made Very Important People (VIPs) in the world of High Art, and the corporate elite, very nervous with his actions and words. She escapes by teleporting from the virtual “arena” (Figure 28).³⁹

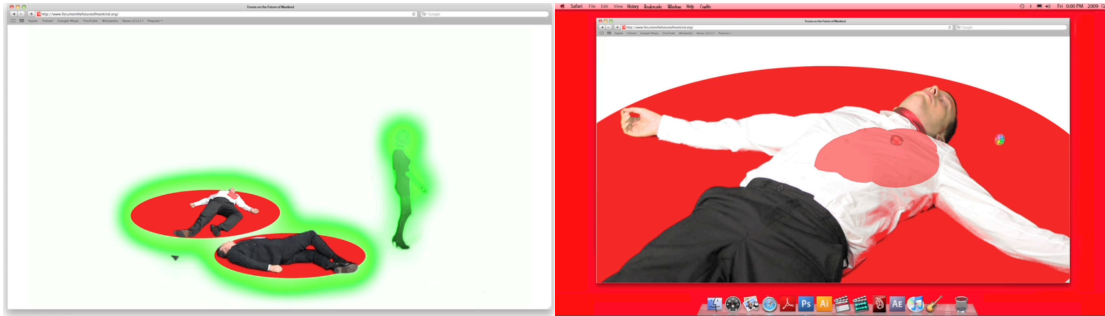


Figure 28

Through the hypertextuality of these events, I change, even flip, the documentation style of the video into the style characteristic to film and theater. The characters represent an alternate reality of double agency (hackers), conspiracy (source of misorientation), and embedded surveillance, or possibly self-surveillance. I shape the technology to replicate my thoughts for the project. As a film/video/internet hybrid, *FOFOM* simulates the paranoia present in Jeff

³⁹ Her exit is similar to the teleportation into the virtual space, but color shifting (through the color spectrum) halos surround the other two bodies in the image. Art World's body shifts into the color spectrum and fades from the scene. This fade resembles analogue editing in the digital format.

Stanley's mind that stems from "viral" (and virtual) conspiracy facts on the internet. I present the death of the character Jeff Stanley on a virtual desktop environment and serves as a metaphor for my practice. Now digitized and recoded in a virtual dimension, Jeff Stanley is forever trapped in a virtual existence.⁴⁰ He hacks into virtual technology.

The third act of *FOFOM* is reliant on abstract gestures to communicate. *ACT III: EXISTENCE IN POST-MEDIA* (2009-2010) picks up where *ART IS FASCISM* left the viewer. The virtual space is empty except for the deceased Jeff Stanley. Suddenly, he wakes up, finding himself in what appears to be a "real" studio space. To communicate by way of gesture, Jeff Stanley begins to dance around a circle, a spot light projecting onto the floor (Figure 29). The dancing continues until Jeff Stanley is sweating and losing energy. However, he must continue for what may be eternity.⁴¹ The camera dollies away from Jeff Stanley as he dances (Figure 30). As the camera moves farther away, the viewer realizes that the space Jeff Stanley inhabits is a virtual 3D model of stage amid a barren landscape.

⁴⁰ This is similar to the birth of Max Headroom in the Television series, Max Headroom. Max headroom is a 3D graphic talking head with saved data captured from the mind of a "hard-hitting" reporter, Edison Carter. Carter was both vital member, and a menace to the broadcasting network, Network 23, that employed him. However, *EXISTENCE IN POST-MEDIA* casts Jeff Stanley in an existence without media. He awakens when all technology has been obliterated. The opening subtitle acknowledges this idea to the viewer.

⁴¹ It is true that a computer, or server, containing digital data on its hard drive can be shut down. We should look again to the opening subtitle of *EP-M* when it is introduced that Jeff Stanley exists in a world without technology, as if Jeff Stanley's digital existence occurs in a virtual dimension. This is something like an afterlife, but digital. It is a fantastical digital afterlife.



Figure 29

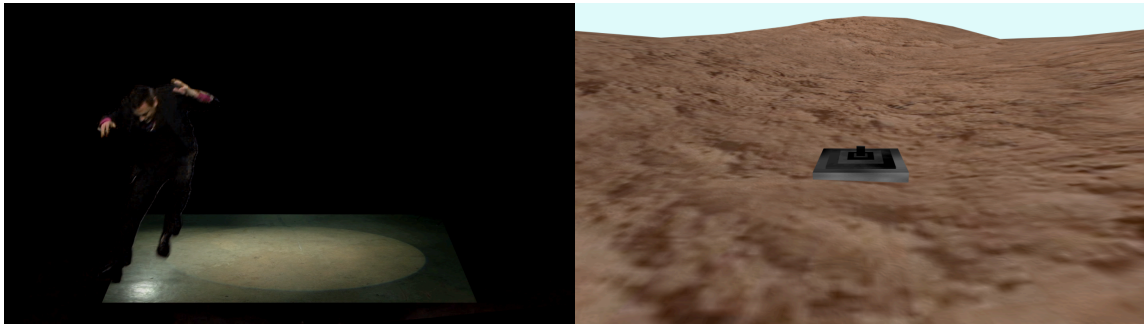


Figure 30

The 3D model of the barren landscape expands on the trap that contains Jeff Stanley inside of a virtual dimension. The act of dancing that occurs in *EXISTENCE IS POST-MEDIA* is less explained. The dance is a reaction to the amount of nonsensical text and monologue throughout the previous two acts.

The combination of different forms, styles, and subject matter is inherent in contemporary art practices. In the three acts of *FOFOM*, I took concepts from transnational politics, art history, existentialist philosophy, ancient mythology, and the inner struggle of creation to complete my vision. The appropriation becomes the background. The foreground is a performing tape with a performing talking head (façade).

I decided to continue with this type of method: Performing video and performing talking head. The fantastical aspects of *FOFOM* had driven me to a dead end. If Jeff Stanley would continue as my voice, I would have to insert his virtual existence into existing media.

2010 REMAKES PERFECTING PRODUCTION

In early 2010, I started a series of videos called **2010 Remakes**. I remade three videos by three different artists, which contained social content and pragmatic methods. These pragmatic methods combine careful editing and decision making to produce a visual vocabulary in my work. This refined my sense of when to cut, what to cut, and what to leave. The cuts would follow the action.

The first remake, *SHUT THE FUCK UP 2010 (STFU, 2010)*, appropriated and re-scripted from the 1984 General Idea original.⁴² My critical focus is on the star like status of the artist as promoted by mass media, including one of the art world's central figures, Matthew Barney.⁴³ In my version, I embedded the character, Jeff Stanley, into the piece by adopting a new persona and a new video language with precise jump cuts, improved words, and better body language. Changes towards a new persona and new vocabulary are fundamental to each series to apply the most effective critique. Ultimately, the remake is a virtual hacking of existing media.

⁴² The General Idea "original" is critical of the mass media's view of the crackpot artist. When I say "crackpot", I refer to the generalized conception that artists are crazy, weird, or socially deviant.

⁴³ General Idea "used" Yves Klein in a similar way. Yves Klein's International Klein Blue and the General Idea's Poodle are used to paint Xs as performed by General Idea.



Figure 31



Figure 32

With *STFU* (Figure 31), Jeff Stanley refers to new technologies as tools for artists. The internet, Youtube, and vimeo allow for a new type of venue that is accessible from anywhere on the planet. The background behind Jeff Stanley is a designed color bar signifying tuning into an incoming broadcast. The online video, a new type of “broadcast”, is also a source for news corporations, or the media to access the viewer. The beginning of *STFU* shows Jeff Stanley shouting various puns, including “SHUT THE FUCK UP!” at the media.⁴⁴ Technically and conceptually, Jeff Stanley resembles a contemporary “Max Headroom” (Figure 32). A spinning hypercube is used as a graphic to divide segments of the video (Figure 33).⁴⁵

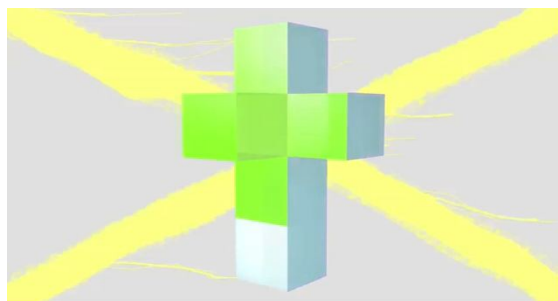


Figure 33

⁴⁴ Technically and conceptually, Jeff Stanley resembles a contemporary “Max Headroom” (Figure 32). The minimal background graphic resembles Max Headroom.

⁴⁵ The hypercube is referred to as “Jeff Stanley’s signature device.”

Later in the video sequence of *STFU*, Jeff Stanley describes a fictional performance in which he applies petroleum jelly to a large canvas by means of a hand-held hypercube. This action produces three canvases with three painted “X”s. This explains the composition of the spinning hypercube (Figure 33) which has a painted “X” in the background. The viewer imagines the complex semiotic relationship of three “X”s. As Jeff Stanley puts it, “...XXX equals poison, XXX as porno, XXX as kisses, XXX as targets, XXX as signature, XXX as epitaph...”

Is the performance an inside “Art World” joke? Does a strange sexual innuendo come out of the relationships between objects and words? Could Jeff Stanley merely be entertaining himself? The fictional petroleum jelly/hypercube performance, the appropriation of Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster 3*,⁴⁶ and the word play produced by the script and cuts produce a hyperbolic puzzle for the viewer.



Figure 34

⁴⁶ The scene from *Cremaster 3* appropriated in *STFU* is from “The Order Sequence,” in which Richard Serra slings petroleum jelly against a steel plate (Figure 34). The petroleum jelly then oozes down a plastic lip spiraling down the five percent slope of the Guggenheim. Barney uses petroleum jelly for several sculptural works and videos. Jeff Stanley explains the relationship between the hypercube and the petroleum jelly, “The method: Dipping one figure (the hypercube) into another figure’s ground (the petroleum jelly).”

The viewer is asked to put the puzzle together, and seconds later an unresolved friction produces an unsolved puzzle as one line from Jeff Stanley suggests “the pieces just don’t add up.”



Figure 35



Figure 36

I Am An Artist 2010 (IAAA, 2010), the second video in the **2010 Remakes** series, was re-scripted from the 1975 Les Levine’s “original”. In original context, IAAA was critical of the conservative art for art’s sake dogma.⁴⁷ Here, Jeff Stanley becomes a violent businessman/gangster (Figure 35). The artist worships Global Neoliberal Capitalism with dollar signs in his eyes.⁴⁸ The video follows the artist through the subway in New York City, using images found in a Google search. Wall Street is signified behind the gangster artist who wants more money (Figure 36).

The background of *IAAA* changes from one subway station to another. Jeff Stanley exists in a different space other than the virtual environment seen in

⁴⁷ Art for art’s sake is philosophy, which separates art from a specific function. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin links art (art for art’s sake) and fascism especially in examining Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto*, which contains the Futurist slogan, “Let art be created. Let the world perish.” This also connects back to *ART IS FASCISM*, which explores the same idea.

⁴⁸ Jeff Stanley can be compared to John Heartfield, Dadaist known for his photomontages involving subverted Nazi symbols (IE: swastikas) to undermine their ideology.

STFU, or parts of *FOFOM*. Jeff Stanley acknowledges the viewer and asks if the viewer wants change. Jump cuts are still delivering the message. However, Jeff Stanley may exist anywhere given the use of chroma key compositing that produces a transparency when a color is “keyed out”⁴⁹ that allows for layering of two video images.

With the remake, I intended to emulate a popular filmmaking approach. The remake is embraced by the mass media, especially Hollywood. 2010 is the year of remakes in American cinema, making up many of new releases. I obviously employ lower production costs than big budget feature films. I look more to the internet: DoltYourself and YouTube types of production. I became more concerned with the means and aesthetics of online media, constantly improving on the substance, phrasing, and design in each high definition video product.

The internet and interactivity currently build on the language and literacy of new technologies as a “virtual expanded cinema”.⁵⁰ Artificial Intelligence is becoming a prominent subject again, after a short-lived hiatus starting in the mid-

⁴⁹ In this case the color is reduced with the help of a greenscreen. The main subject, Jeff Stanley, is shot against a background painted a single color. This color is selected to be removed with another video in its place.

⁵⁰ Gene Youngblood wrote *Expanded Cinema* (1970) proved influential in establishing the field of media arts. He discusses “the beginning of an era of image-exchange between man and man.” He suggests that this network of image-exchange, mass media conditions the contemporary man’s environment and experience. This creates a new consciousness for man. The internet is the source of a more recent shift into a new collective consciousness. As a construct of cinema, theatre, video, and the internet, *FOFOM* is reflective of this new shift.

90s.⁵¹ Extensions of the human consciousness via the internet are developing every day at a rate that may eventually challenge human intelligence.

At the time of **2010 Remakes**, I was concerned with an institutional critique within the institutionalized art world and its trends. 2010 Remakes are attempts to hack the art world and art history directly. I have not left this message behind.⁵² One term coined by the artist/musician group, Negativland, involving this approach is called culture jamming.⁵³ Culture jamming associates anti-consumerism through subversive expression on the global stage through mass media. Within my work, culture jamming becomes media hacking by breaking into the system of the institutionalized art world and institutionalized mass media.

Those who do not accept this activity as art brand the socially conscious artist as “activist”.⁵⁴ People who do not believe that art can impact society think that art can only work tangentially with a political statement. In other words, they leave the statement open ended enough to fall into other categories. This

⁵¹ I believe that this was a trojan horse strategy by those controlling the media to pull one over upon the average user. Technology is growing exponentially. Currently, consumers are being told that at some point in the not too distant future technology will stop this growth and they will no longer need to upgrade electronic, computers, and equipment. This is false in that it is still relevant to the evolution and understanding of humans and technology to discuss openly the growth of technology. An artist must use a similar (albeit counter) strategy to confront the existential conflicts facing our current conditions.

⁵² But rather I am deconstructing mass media consciousness.

⁵³ This is in lineage with the Situationists, the Theatre of the Absurd, DADA, and now Interventionists.

⁵⁴ For the artist branded as an “activist” is not viewed as producing the one “true” universal art guided through “inner-direction”.

conceals their message, or mutes it entirely.⁵⁵ This is a political decision.⁵⁶ This creates a conflict for artists who present an opposing view, or who wish to present their ideas more openly.

My decision is to bring the issue to the foreground. Art is presented as a functional device, especially in terms of images impacting and interfering with cultural and social issues. In *STFU* and *IAAA*, Jeff Stanley establishes a double agency⁵⁷ to dress and appear as the opposition to understand and criticize the view of art for art's sake in favor of a more socially conscious practice.

I have shed new light looking back to my works, *The Forum on the Future of Mankind* and **2010 Remakes**. They activate the potential of social change through art production. Another shift happened after making this connection. I decided to use this “double agent” approach to deconstruct mass media “misorientation”. As an artist informed on topics such as media aesthetics and transnational organizations, I must take it upon myself to initiate work reflective of this approach. Buckminster Fuller made a choice to act as a designer, inventor, and architect with tangible if not practical effects in the real world.

⁵⁵ See *H2*, *Chernobyl*, *POST-PRODUCTION*, and *CURRENCY*.

⁵⁶ Adrian Piper, *The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists*. 1990. Issues of race and gender as well as social and cultural reduce the value of the work of art according to some members of the established critical and curatorial art world. They express that art is devalued because of the “low quality” presentation of work. These same figures in the art world stick to an art for art's sake theology.

⁵⁷ James Bond, 007, is an example of double agency in the foreground, as a double agent, and the background, in the storyline. The politics of the situation in a Bond film, such as *Casino Royale*, creates a conflict in Bond's role as a spy versus his personal agenda. The film also establishes an overarching secret society, or shadow organization, that turns friend against friend, or government against government, bank against bank.

CONSERVER CURRENT “EXCHANGE”

In a fundamental way, the *2010 Remakes* build on the use of building blocks: sentence structure and logical phrasing via jump cuts, motion graphics and animation that signify an idea more directly, and more aesthetic cohesion. Over each project, I would build on this phrasing and vocabulary. I would direct my attention to the news commentators themselves. As a hacker breaks into a system, Jeff Stanley would break into the role of the media commentator.



Figure 37

My series, *ConServer* (2010-2011), is a further development of the character/persona, Jeff Stanley. *Mass Money* (2010, Figure 37), investigates conservative mass media personalities' attitude about the national debt. The conservatives addressed in this video thrive on and construct the paranoia of their own audience. As the character becomes more robotic (and psychotic) with a very aggressive delivery, he also becomes more interactive, more human. I do not see this as a simple psychoanalysis of just one individual. Simply, this character evolves with his behavior. He mimics those found in the media in a

similar way that an embodied agent, or avatar with Artificial Intelligence (AI), will eventually converse with a user via an algorithm of dialogue that allows it to communicate.⁵⁸

I think of **ConServer** as critical of trends in media, but also of the political system's structure. For example, Glenn Beck, news commentator, uses a “trusted” commercial media outlet to present a conservative agenda. *The Daily Show* created by Jon Stewart establishes a comedic view, and/or parody, of conservative news commentators such as Glenn Beck while using the same commercial media look and nuance. However it is intended, the later presents the liberal political view. **ConServer** is critical and aggressive towards both political points of view, Republican and Democrat: The Right and the Left.

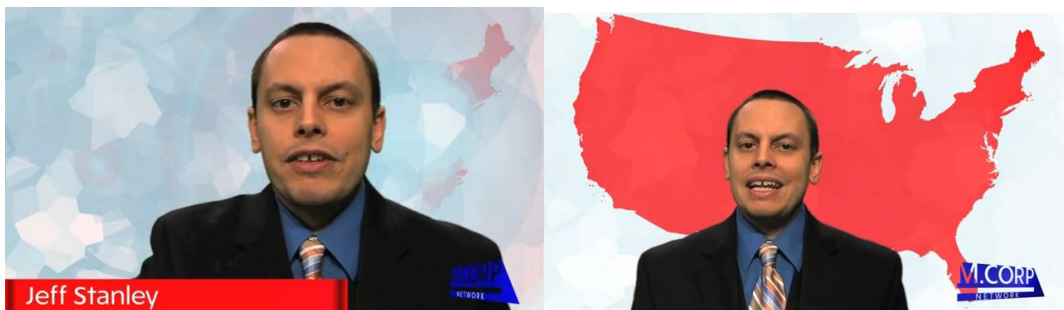


Figure 38

Hard Red Facts (2010), a **ConServer** video, resembles a news broadcast set-up: flashy motion graphics, introduction music,⁵⁹ a speaker, and a network logo (Figure 38). At first, the motion graphics appears as the viewer would

⁵⁸ An embodied agent can take the form of an avatar mimicking human intelligence. The avatar learns from a set of existing conversations that accumulate over time to predict the behavior of the human user. From this, an algorithm allows the avatar to perform and mimic an engagement within a future conversation.

⁵⁹ The music is appropriated from broadcast news.

expect. The shape of the United States of America is isolated in the background. However, the color changes from Red (Republican) to Blue (Democrat) signifying a flip in political orientation. In *Mass Money* and *Hard Red Facts*, I appropriate lines and scripts from conservative news commentators, but lines from liberal news commentators are also included.⁶⁰

A news commentator would not switch between conservative and liberal preference so frantically. The media outlet, network, or individual news commentator is one sided, yet convinces the viewer that they are bringing a balanced opinion. With **ConServer**, I intend to reveal the double agency and double media-speak of both the Right and the Left.

The name, **ConServer**, consists of a contradiction: **ConServ**(ative) politics and methods, or methods of preservation and tradition (to limit change). I embed myself in the concrete ideologies of the conservative to understand the concrete problems of the world. **ConServer**⁶¹ signifies a direction towards web based presentation, and a user of new terminology and technology. Technology is exponentially changing, or in this way it is the opposite of conservative.

ConServer creates a division⁶² between the Right and the Left like the map of the USA shown in *Hard Red Facts*, which eventually explodes and leaves

⁶⁰ The “original” news commentator scripts are altered in one way, or another, to create ambiguity, or possibly neutrality within a political issue.

⁶¹ Conserver is used in technological terms to represent a series of “console servers” which is a remote, or virtual, device. Media theory and distribution of displays interconnects with the technological aspects of **ConServer**.

⁶² Jeff Stanley breaks into the role of a “great divider” of a nation, or news commentator.

the country divided between the Red (Right) and the Blue (Left, see Figure 39). The only events which resemble this type of division in the map occurs when the results, or projected results, during national elections. The fractured Red shapes on the map signify an abstract explosion, another graphic used by network news when covering war, or bombings.



Figure 39

As stated earlier, I have arrived at the concept of media hacking through the study and change of narrative traditions, reprogramming and recoding new thoughts and actions, assimilation, and even morphing into the role of the news commentator. This process of studying the information and expression (aggressive delivery) is extremely task oriented for a one-man production team. The experimentation present within this series, for example *With a Capital V* (2011), takes the performing, physical expression, and video editing to an “extreme” level. The extreme represents both sides: The Left and the Right (political positions).

The script of *With a Capital V* (Figure 40) takes lines from both Conservative and Liberal news commentators. This adds to the intensity of the

jump cut structure and the transitions contained in the sequence. The Left begins the video while the Right ends it. The motion graphics further intensifies



Figure 40

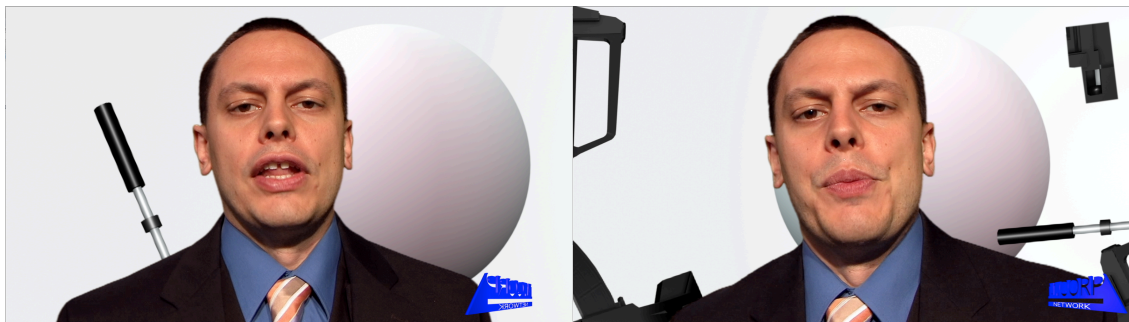


Figure 41

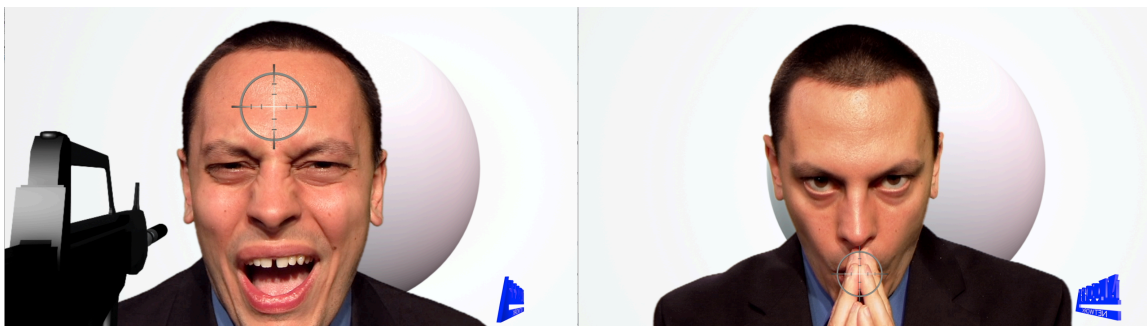


Figure 42

the expression, but also establishes a more complicated and intertwined trajectory. To start, a black metallic object dances in and out of frame as Jeff Stanley presents the Left argument (Figure 41). When a transition occurs from Left to Right (political positions), the object is revealed to be a machine gun. The

gun is pointed at Jeff Stanley's forehead as he chuckles. This is signified by another motion graphic, the crosshair (Figure 42). The national debate on gun control was growing in intensity in late 2010, early 2011. The political positions, both Left and Right, are presented in the video. The last shot shows the frame filled with the crosshairs (Figure 43), a signifier the Republicans used to target all of the offices in the country they desired to win.

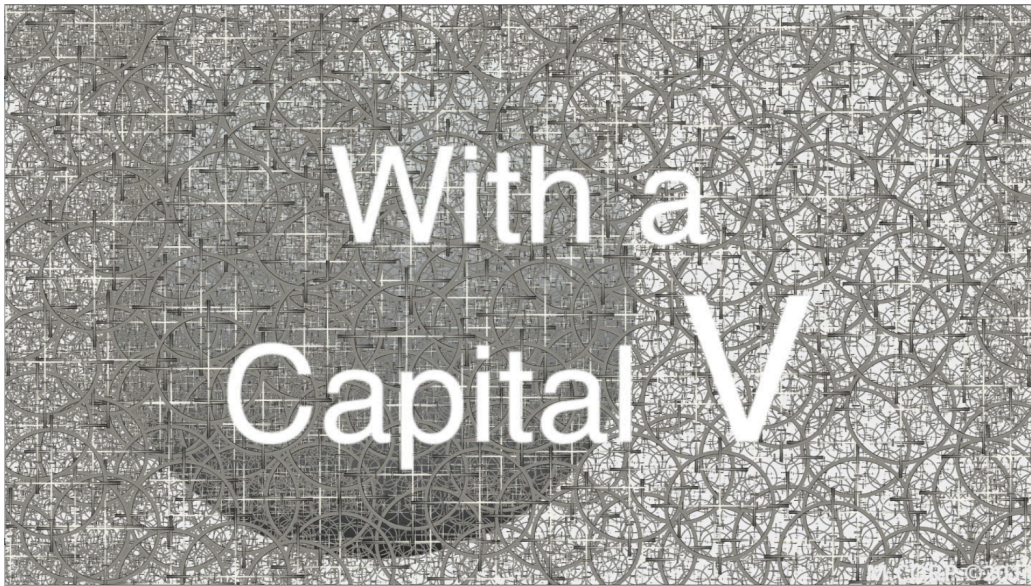


Figure 43

Initially, I use national and transnational political vocabulary to present a position, but I then deconstruct the meaning. *With a Capital V* represents violent rhetoric used at the time of the Second Amendment debates. The violent rhetoric is delivered by Jeff Stanley. His facial features express violence. From Left to Right, the script first appears to produce an end to a spread of violence, but over time it attacks the violent phrasing with more violent description, and delivery.

Part of my process treats vernacular and rhetoric as a “word soup.”⁶³ انقلاب (Coup d’etat) (2011) presents a mixture of my own written script and various news commentators. The subject and content are still focused on overtly discussing violent rhetoric in network news. Recently, imagery is processed similarly to that of words.

In the background, a graph displays a constant animation of a steep incline followed by a rapid decline (Figure 44). Is this a heartbeat? Or is it possibly the rise and fall of a civilization? Maybe it signifies peak oil.

The title, انقلاب, is Arabic for describing a revolution, or military coup. Jeff Stanley loses his concept of reality when he suddenly appears with a shaved head. Chosen for the recent uprisings in Egypt, Lybia, and Tunisia, maps of the Middle East are displayed behind Jeff Stanley (Figure 45). The maps have been manipulated and saturated with bright color. Maps are overlapped as Jeff Stanley pulls down his underwear to reveal, not genitalia, but a geological junk composed of North and South Korea and the pyramids of Egypt (Figure 46).

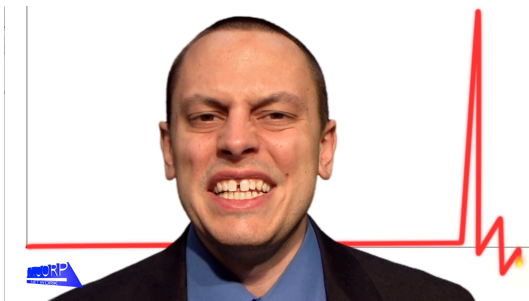


Figure 44



Figure 45

⁶³ This “word soup” is linked to William Burroughs’ cut poetry, or David Bowie’s songwriting process using a computer software that mashes together newspaper headlines.

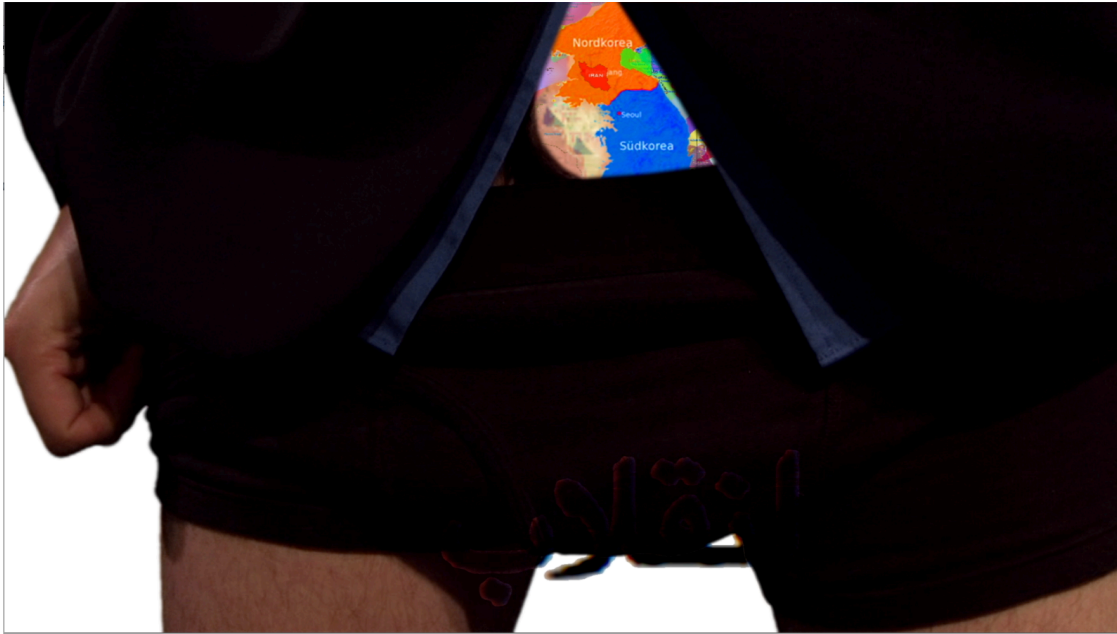


Figure 46

Breakdown (2011) has a more intuitive and impulsive approach. I allowed more freedom to enter the sequence of phrasing. I accumulated the lines via a Google automated search (Figure 47). I begin to type a word into the Google search engine (the new automation feature resembles a smart search, or the start of an Artificial Intelligence) and allow the chance of this intelligent search to direct me to new meaning.

Intuition had a strong influence on this process. I think of intuition as a calculated impulse. The “breakdown” occurs in *Breakdown* when Jeff Stanley dances to the broadcast music (Figure 48) as if ignoring the task of presenting mass media hysteria in previous moments. Also, Jeff Stanley holds his hands up to his face in the form of a triangle with his eye directly in the center (Figure 49).

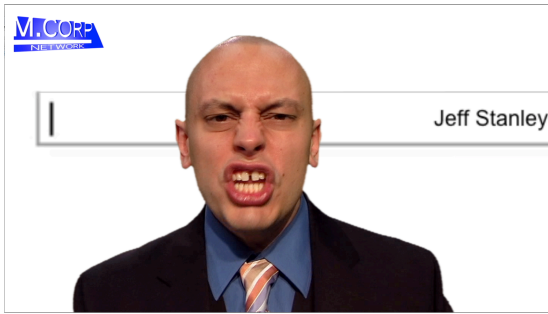


Figure 47

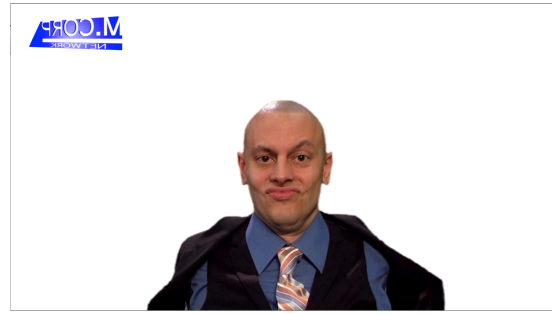


Figure 48



Figure 49

PRESENTATION OF CONSERVER

I establish Jeff Stanley, the artist, as an online presence that works as cultural “hacker” and critical “terrorist”. Jeff Stanley, the **ConServer** character, plays the analogous role to that of Max Headroom, the popular 80s anti-corporation TV personality/seller of Pepsi talking head, and the pirate who interrupted the Chicago ABC station broadcast of *Doctor Who*.⁶⁴

Presently, **ConServer** exists online through Vimeo and Youtube, but the social network distribution is a new venue, and its popularity rate needs to grow. Not many people have crossed paths with the work by chance. Ultimately **ConServer** will be present on the website, matrioshkacorporation.com.⁶⁵

“M.CORP NETWORK” is the logo present in every **ConServer** video. “M.CORP” is shorthand for Matrioshka Corporation. “M.CORP” applies the “matrioshka” principle to a corporate model.⁶⁶ Basically, Jeff Stanley controls Jeff Stanley who controls Jeff Stanley, et cetera.

Since **ConServer** is designed around this principle. The individual videos may be may be viewed individually, or as a whole. To have complete understanding of the entire project, it is recommended that **ConServer** be viewedall together. There is a linear structure built out of the visuals and content

⁶⁴ November 22nd, 1987, a man wearing a mask resembling Max Headroom hijacked the television signal during a broadcast of *Doctor Who* in Chicago, IL. This is known as a broadcast signal intrusion.

⁶⁵ Not to be confused with jeffreystanley.net, my personal site.

⁶⁶ The matrioshka, or matryoshka, principle states that for every object, there is a similar object inside.

through the chronological order. If the viewer focuses on details such as hair length, or baldness, and political context, the relationship and development become apparent. On a monitor, **ConServer** is presented as if it were a high-definition television broadcast on an HDTV.

When **ConServer** is presented as a high-definition, single-channel video projection in a room, the setup must resemble a community political rally. The controllers operating the projector and additional speakers must rest in the same area as the projector. This must be extended forward and backward as long as the display image is not disrupted. The reason that equipment must be present in the middle where the projection will be placed is to allow for any audience to be split, or to make a decision to stand/sit at the left, or right, of viewing space.

CONCLUSION AND AFTER VIRTUAL INTERACTION AFTER POST_PRODUCTION

With **ConServer**, I am self-ordained with the task as an artist, or possibly anti-artist, to develop a meaning through a visual reconstruction of the language of media.⁶⁷ For decades, media has been seen as a tool used by and for corporations as a superstructure encapsulating our lives. Media programs and broadcasts are sent by means of telecommunications and television technologies. The internet disrupts this concept of corporate control as a means of communication among users. YouTube has the potential to empower the user, You. The ad embedded in a banner on YouTube still carries the shadow of advertiser intercepting the “pirate” transmission from one YouTube user to another.

As these users buy products and “vote” for certain corporate and political ideologies, every artist is faced with making a political decision based on the way an image, or an object, communicates with the audience. Through the last few years of my practice, I have challenged myself with producing the best way to express my own political agenda. Looking back to my “point of entry”, I realize the formal decisions I have made along the way have created a desire to stay current and relevant with cultural and social issues. I updated my look and aesthetic to reflect the currency of political mass media.

⁶⁷ The way media is delivered to the masses. This is usually considered the consciousness of the masses.

Based on a small open forum, reception, and my own reaction to works, my practice has developed from surface manipulation to media hacking. The formal issues of surface manipulation dealt with transforming an image's⁶⁸ appearance with the use of computer software to sample and blend with works like *H2*. Later, the transformation of the image was based on providing a new context with works like *CURRENCY*. The transformation of appropriated ideas and images were translated into a theatrical powerpoint presentation in *FOFOM* with appropriated images, a performing role, and animation. Lastly, **ConServer** used media hacking to break into a role to disrupt the media status quo by means of expressive performance, motion graphics, and a broadcast "look".

Media hacking can mean a number of things. As it presented through this Report, media hacking can mean video editing, disruption of a multi-media presentations, or breaking into a role as a double agent. Media hacking is the combination of these elements. Media hacking is especially reliant on the aspect of breaking into a role, Jeff Stanley is a news commentator/talking head. In **ConServer**, media hacking relies on the aesthetics of the media language: Motion graphics, a talking head/speaker, appropriated music from major and minor news networks, and a script. These elements are trends in broadcast media.

In identifying **ConServer** as a culmination of this aesthetic, I consider my agenda to be independent of the trends, but dependent on indifference. Jeff

⁶⁸ An appropriated image.

Stanley, the talking head of M.Corp, may speak with the voice of the Right, but he is blending the Right and the Left political positions. This blending is intended to represent the independent, or potential third party, use of the media. The independent is indifferent to the value scale established by the Right and the Left. This allows for a new direction in political orientation and in values. Jeff Stanley is an anarchist for both political agendas, which creates a third party. Our anarchist, Jeff Stanley, rebels against the authority of the media and the corporations, and donates an expression for change to the audience.

The conclusion of **ConServer** is measured in the impact of change affecting the audience. This is not calculated in an effect on a specific media organization, or corporation, but can be averaged by totaling the comments in the open forum, either online, or from interaction of the artist with the audience. After **ConServer**, something that should be considered for future projects is an established forum interface present with the object in the gallery, public space, or online.

When targeting the system, how shall I disrupt the corporate entities? As of a year ago, a corporation has the same rights and privileges in this country as the citizen. The corporation may actually have more rights, privileges, and protection than the average person/citizen/user. Staying technologically literate will be impossible if the predictions of a technological Singularity⁶⁹ prove

⁶⁹ A theory that humans will combine their intelligence and consciousness with machines. Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity is Near*. 2005.

accurate. By that point, most human beings may house technological instruments on, or in, their body that will enhance their intelligence. How will the governments and corporations control and distribute this technology?

The governments and corporations have already orchestrated a surveillance state⁷⁰ from data mining⁷¹ to social networking to personal e-mail to even surveillance cameras on the streets. This use of technology leads to several issues involving the invasion of privacy. The government invades the privacy of members within society, but government itself lacks transparency. Wikileaks.org is one organization effectively producing a counter-move, which releases documents about government and corporate systems allowing for a forced transparency. An artist, or anti-artist, could establish a practice that is similar to this counter-move against a political, or corporate, system. This is an idea very present within culture jamming. I intend for **ConServer**, and media hacking, to be read as a similar counter-move against mass media.

I am currently taking the steps necessary to become a corporation. Jeff Stanley will become one of the first to technologically fuse with an Artificial Intelligence. I consider that the merger with electronic media will produce a functional extension of Jeff Stanley with the tools to create change. The combined efforts as a person, a virtual AI, and a corporation will provide the enhancement an artist, or anti-artist, needs today. Art, or anti-art, and its

⁷⁰ This is possibly a global surveillance state. Corporations extend their reach to a global/transnational level.

⁷¹ Also known as knowledge discovery, data mining is a process of managing data collected from

methods must evolve as the playing field evolves. This describes the 21st century human being.

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